

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

For Release on Receipt (Prepared 8/26/74)

McGarvey 202/343-5634

CITIZENS INTERESTED IN CONSERVATION URGED TO BUY DUCK STAMPS

One of the largest single efforts in North America to insure the future of wildlife--the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp program--is being expanded to encourage citizens outside the hunting community to buy them, Rogers C. B. Morton, Secretary of the Interior, announced today.

"This is a revenue stamp required of all duck hunters 16 years of age or older. Conservationists of all persuasions can make a solid contribution to wildlife preservation by buying a duck stamp for five dollars at their local post office," Morton said. "I am especially proud of the progress in wetlands acquisition from these funds. Since 1971 over 360,000 acres have been set aside for wildlife."

The revenue from the sale of these stamps, which have been issued each year since 1934, goes directly into the purchase of lands for waterfowl nesting, resting, and wintering. More than 160 species of birds, a number of mammals, and fish are directly dependent on wetland habitat for their survival. Some two-thirds of the fish species important to commercial fisheries industry are directly dependent on wetland productivity.

Since 1934 over two million acres of land have been purchased with duck stamp revenues. Average annual receipts from the sale of these stamps now totals about \$11 million.

This effort to preserve wetlands was considered so vital by Congress in 1961 that it enacted the Wetlands Loan Act which authorized a \$105 million interest free loan for use in combination with duck stamp receipts to

(over)

preserve wetland habitat necessary for waterfowl. Since then the Fish and Wildlife Service has acquired an additional 1.75 million acres of waterfowl habitat, principally wetlands in the "prairie pothole duck factory" region of northcentral United States at a cost of \$165 million--half of which was from loan advances and half from duck stamp receipts.

Significant as these results are, wetlands continue to be drained, dredged, filled in and otherwise destroyed at a high rate. During the 1960's some 350,000 acres of small wetlands were drained in the northern prairies, over two million acres of bottomland overflow areas were converted to cropland in the Mississippi River Delta region, and an estimated 150,000 to 300,000 acres of coastal marshes and estuaries were destroyed.

"Most citizens probably are unaware of the vital role wetlands play in our natural environment" Secretary Morton said. "They throb with life. The way they recharge underground water supplies is well known by biologists. They significantly reduce flood crests when left intact because they slow the runoff of heavy rain and snow melt throughout a watershed. Marshes also function continuously as giant biological filters by removing silt, organic wastes, and toxic chemicals caused by agricultural and industrial pollution from water supplies. The vegetation associated with marshes figures prominently in the production and release of oxygen. The biological productivity of wetlands, from the minute algae or microscopic animals to extensive salt marsh flats, is unexcelled when compared to terrestrial agricultural systems. Finally, as a basis for public outdoor recreation, education, and aesthetic values, wetlands are among the finest and most important features of nature. These multiple benefits generally are enjoyed by many more people than just duck hunters. Unfortunately, much of the value of wetlands is not realized by the landowner, therefore leaving little incentive to preserve them.

"The diversity of wetland values, to hunters and nonhunters alike, is so great that all conservationists and people interested in the environment should share in the opportunity to preserve these vital natural resources. One way each person can make his own personal contribution is to buy a duck stamp. Protecting and preserving our environment is everyone's responsibility. The money spent on a duck stamp has another effect far beyond its cost in terms of protecting our resources from construction on an inappropriate site that may be a burden on generations to come. I urge all citizens to take the time to go to their local post office and vote to preserve what's not only beautiful but also ecologically important in America by purchasing a duck stamp," Morton concluded.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

\$5



WOOD DUCK

VOID AFTER JUNE 30, 1975

MIGRATORY BIRD HUNTING STAMP